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SENATE RESOLUTION 43
By Wilder

A RESOLUTION To honor and commend Evelyn Bryan Johnson
for her remarkable accomplishments in the field
of aviation.

WHEREAS, It is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should salute those citizens who through their extraordinary efforts have distinguished themselves as community leaders of whom we can all be proud; and

WHEREAS, One such noteworthy person is Evelyn Bryan Johnson, who will be honored during the grand opening ceremony of the Tennessee Museum of Aviation for her significant contributions to the field of aviation; and

WHEREAS, Evelyn Johnson, raised in Corbin, Kentucky and Etowah, Tennessee, graduated with honors from Tennessee Wesleyan College with a degree in English in 1929; after teaching for a few years, she decided to return to school and enrolled at the University of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, At UT she met fellow student Wyatt Jennings Bryan; the couple were married in 1931, and moved to Jefferson City in 1933, where they opened a dry-cleaning

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service called College Cleaners; the business was beginning to flourish when World War II started and Wyatt Bryan enlisted in the United States Air Force; in order to keep College Cleaners operating, Evelyn Bryan Johnson worked 18 hour days; and

WHEREAS, In 1944, Mrs. Johnson took her first flying lesson at Island Airport; to attend her lessons she rode a train from Jefferson City to Knoxville, then transferred to a bus, which she rode to the end of the line, then walked one-quarter mile down the road, where she took a row boat to the Island Airport; and

WHEREAS, Evelyn Bryan Johnson's first lesson was the 1st of October 1944; she flew her first solo the 8th of November 1944, in a Piper J3 Cub, that had no lights, no starter, and no radio; and

WHEREAS, She began working part-time at the Morristown Air Field; in 1947, she became a Civil Aviation Authority Instructor and, in 1949, she bought half of Morristown Flying Service; she was selected by the CAA for a Pilot Examiners Certificate in 1952; and

WHEREAS, In 1953, she was chosen along with Tommy Moore to manage Morristown's new airport; as an instructor and one of the managers of the Airport, Evelyn Johnson's days were long, and her students numerous, and her flight hours began rapidly accumulating; and

WHEREAS, During the 1950s Mrs. Johnson was involved in several transcontinental air races sponsored by the women's pilot organization, the "Ninety-Nines"; she added a helicopter rating to her license in 1957, and she became only the fourth woman in the world to hold a helicopter instructor rating in 1958; and

WHEREAS, Her interest in helicopters waned after she witnessed a helicopter crash into a power line at the Morristown Airport; the helicopter lifted off the ground only a few feet before it crashed onto the ramp; as smoke poured out of the wreckage, Evelyn Johnson grabbed a fire extinguisher and crawled beneath the still churning rotor blades to turn off the ignition; she then emptied the extinguisher on the engine stopping the fire from spreading; the crash killed the

passenger instantly, but her quick action saved the badly injured pilot; for her remarkable bravery and swift action she was awarded the Carnegie Medal for Heroism; and

WHEREAS, In the early 1960s Evelyn Bryan Johnson was faced with two poignant losses, the death of her business partner, Tommy Moore in 1962 and her husband, Wyatt Jennings Bryan in 1963; her personal setbacks made Evelyn Johnson even more determined professionally; her students kept coming and she kept flying; and, in 1965, she married Morgan Johnson; and

WHEREAS, During her distinguished aviation career Mrs. Johnson has been recognized with over thirty honors and awards, including receiving her Silver Wings in 1969, and being recognized as the Flight Instructor of the Year for the Nashville FSDO in 1974 and the FAA's National Flight Instructor of the Year in 1979; and

WHEREAS, This accomplished pilot has also received the Piedmont Airline Pioneer Award and the Elder Statesman Award from The National Aeronautics Association; in 1994, she was inducted into the Women in Aviation Pioneers Hall of Fame and received an Award of Merit from the Ninety-Nines; she has also been honored by the Hamblen County Women's Hall of Fame and was in the first group of three inducted into the National Flight Instructor Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, She began her astute service with the Tennessee Aeronautics Commission (TAC) on April 4, 1983, and has compiled the longest term of service on the commission since its formation; still a valuable member of TAC, she previously served a term as its Chairman; in 1991, she joined the United Flying Octogenarians (UFOs), a group of pilots in their 80s that are still flying; and

WHEREAS, Evelyn Bryan Johnson reached a record 50,000 flying hours, virtually all as an instructor, in 1991; her flight time, in 1996, reached 54,475 cumulative hours, the equivalent of over six years in the air or 216 flights around the world at 100 miles per hour; in fifty-five years as a pilot, she had flown over 56,000 cumulative hours in 1999; and

WHEREAS, The Guinness Book of World Records rightfully recognizes her as the highest time female pilot in history; and

WHEREAS, A caring and skilled instructor, Evelyn Johnson was given the nickname, Mama Bird, by one of her students, because of the way she minded after her students like a mama bird looking after its baby birds; Mrs. Johnson has soloed numerous students, she quit counting years ago when the number reached about three thousand; she has conducted over nine thousand flight tests; and

WHEREAS, She taught two Vice Presidents of Piedmont Airlines to fly, and also gave Senator Howard Baker his private pilot flight test; due to Senator Baker recounting the test in a meeting of Congress the incident has been entered into *The Congressional Record*; during the exam she told him to execute a series of stalls; he commented that the “airplane wasn’t made for stalls”; she told him that if he didn’t do them “then he’d just have to get along without his private pilot’s license”; he executed the stalls and received his license; and

WHEREAS, Despite experiencing two complete engine failures, a fire in the air, one of her airplanes swallowing a valve over a hilly area of Texas and having her plane’s RPMs drop to 1,110, two hundred above idle, during a night take off from Morristown, Evelyn Bryan Johnson has always landed safely, and she continues to fly and give flight lessons and exams on a frequent basis today; and

WHEREAS, Evelyn Johnson has conscientiously flown search and rescues for the Morristown Civil Air Patrol, which she helped found in 1947; she has raced in five Powder Puff Derbies, which entailed coast to coast flights, and also has fared a Tri-Pacer to South America; and

WHEREAS, She served on the Women’s Advisory Committee on Aviation, an organization that twice yearly went to Washington to meet with FAA Administrators and offer suggestions, many of which were implemented; she has also served as the Director of NAFI; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Johnson epitomizes the spirit and commitment that is characteristic of a true Tennessean; and

WHEREAS, A few women have flown faster, farther and higher, but no woman has trained more pilots or flown and logged more hours in more types of airplanes than Evelyn Johnson; and

WHEREAS, This General Assembly finds it appropriate to pause in its deliberations to acknowledge and applaud Evelyn Bryan Johnson for her numerous contributions to aviation in the State of Tennessee; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, That we hereby honor Evelyn Bryan Johnson upon the occasion of her recognition by the Tennessee Museum of Aviation, salute her patience, purpose, and commitment, and thank her for her meritorious contributions to the field of aviation; we also extend to her our heartfelt best wishes for every future success.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.